

CHAPTER FIVE  
IDENTITY PERCEPTION OF PAKISTANI  
AND BALUCHI MINORITIES AT STATE  
SCHOOLS IN BAHRAIN IN ASSOCIATION  
WITH(IMPLICIT) LANGUAGE POLICY  
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**1.Introduction**

Bahrain is a small country in the Arabian Gulf in the Middle East with a dense population of over a million people across a total of 770 km<sup>2</sup>(Survey & Land Registration Bureau 2013a). The official language is Arabic; however, more than half of the residents of Bahrain are not citizens, some of whom are Arabs and some are not, while the citizens themselves are diverse and come from various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. The Bahraini government allows all residents to benefit from its state schools (known as government schools) without fees on an equal basis without any discrimination. This has created multilingual communities within schools, which are officially “Arabic speaking” communities. Despite this community comprising a significant population of students in state schools in the capital, Manama, no research has been published on them as a speech community within Bahrain which can be affected by language policies.

Recent research on language policy in difference countries emphasised the language rights of ethnic minorities within a country and on minority groups of immigrants. The idea of forcing a society to speak a single language is no longer acceptable to many researchers (and arguably to the people themselves), nor is it practical in a rapidly growing world that is mostly bilingual or multilingual.

This chapter aims to observe the language status of students in Bahraini state schools and how they perceive their native language(s) and Arabic as a result of language ideologies and policies practised in the government schools. The study is interested in exploring, first of all, whether language policies and/or local ideologies affect participants' language choices in different domains and their attitudes towards each language and, secondly, whether self-perception and attitudes towards spoken languages change after years of exposure to Arabic in state schools.

To reach its goal, this chapter examines data collected using a survey of young Pakistani and Baluchi students in government schools in Bahrain and analyses their responses in association with various factors. This chapter fills a gap in the literature about linguistic choices of immigrant children and the role of state schools in Bahrain in promoting integration. This chapter is

divided into four sections; the first presents an overview of language policy in relation to immigrants, language rights of minorities and implicit versus explicit policies. The second section will present the methodology and explain how the survey was designed and conducted. This will be followed by a presentation of the data and then a discussion. Upon that, the chapter's conclusions are drawn and, as one would expect, more questions are raised.

## **2. Language policy and immigrants/language rights of minorities**

The question of the integration of immigrants is one of identity. To start with, it is important to note that assimilation and integration are not to be used interchangeably. While “assimilation” suggests deleting or at least blurring the differences, such as cultural and/or linguistic differences, to become more like the majority and in our case the host-country people, “integration” does not indicate a loss of identity for the sake of adopting the host-country's lifestyle. Rather, “integration” proposes an understanding and acceptance of the host country, with its new customs, new terms and expectations. Integration does suggest a degree of assimilation, while simultaneously reserving the other identity, that of the ethnic (and sometimes religious) nature.

To many socio-linguists and sociologists (e.g. Joseph 2004; Castells 1997), identities are constructed and “the emergence of a new identity” does not conflict with “pre-existing components” of an individual identity (Bruter 2005:15). In other words, despite it being challenging at times, immigrants do not have to choose between the identity relating to their ethnic origin and the newly acquired (or desired to be acquired) identity of the host country. For example, in reference to the United States, one of the most ethnically diverse countries with immigrants from all over the world, Salomone (2010:12) concludes that the “[a]dvances in the fields of technology and transportation, along with new opportunities for dual citizenship” are a few of the advantages that permit dual identities to emerge, something that was not possible even five decades ago. Salomone (2010:12) explains that “[t]he recognition afforded ethnic ties in the wake of the civil rights movement has further created a climate where young people from immigrant families now feel free to forge their own sense of what it means to be American.” To them, the image of the melting pot is no longer valid in a rapidly changing world (Salomone 2010). Nevertheless, balancing the “dual cultures” remains difficult for many due to cultural clashes (Salomone 2010: 94).

Language is not only a means of communication, but also a conduit of identity (May 2001). Recently, bilingualism and multilingualism have no longer come to be seen as a threat to the integration of immigrants in a

community. As modern education recognises the advantages of embracing bilingualism and even trilingualism (see, for example, Chua (2011) and Gorter, Zenotz and Cenoz (2014) on Singapore shifting from bilingualism to trilingualism in education), it would be discriminative on the one hand and regressive on the other to ban (or expect banning) a language other than the official language(s) of the country from being spoken and used, whether by citizens or immigrants. Requiring students to master the official language of the country as a medium of instruction does not require them having to shift from their other language(s).

The terms “mother tongue” and “native language” seem to be politically charged and tend to be, by many laypeople, ethnicised. While some speakers (and references) use either term to refer to the language learnt first in the early years of a speaker's life, there is still a strong tendency by a large number of speakers to link the term to the language that originates from the region or ethnic group they belong to, even if they learn this language at a later stage in their lives or, in some cases, even if they never master it or learn it. The term “first language”, on the other hand, while used interchangeably with the former two by many, can also be a language that one learns in the early years of his or her life and masters it better than other languages even though it is not the language of his or her ethnic group. In this chapter, I will use “native language” to refer to the language of the ethnic group, whether it is a first language, a second language or not mastered or used by the speaker. I will use “first language” to refer to the language that is used most in one's communication, the language seen as the more instant choice for a more comfortable and easier communication.

Linguistic choice is a human right. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) distinguishes between (a) language rights, which she views as being more general and unnecessary, such as learning a foreign language; and (b) linguistic human rights, which she views as necessary rights. She categorises the latter into types; first, as necessary individual rights, which are “the right to identify with, to maintain and to fully develop one's mother tongue(s)” and also access to mother tongue(s) (2000:498). The second type of linguistic human rights, as described by Skutnabb-Kangas, are the necessary collective rights, which are “the right of minorities and indigenous people to exist and to reproduce themselves as distinct groups, with their own languages and cultures” (2000: 498). It would be, thus, useful to use the term “linguistic rights” to illustrate what this chapter is focusing on; however, despite the usefulness of this distinction, I will be using “language rights” to refer to these necessary rights since the sources I am referring to use this more generic term to refer to this specific right.

Van der Stoep (1999) presented a dichotomy of negative rights versus

positive human rights. Negative rights are defined as “the right to non-discrimination in the enjoyment of human rights”, whereas positive rights are “the right to the maintenance and development of identity through the freedom to practice or use those special and unique aspects of their minority life—typically culture, religion and language” (Van der Stoep 1999:8).

Language rights should be considered when constructing the language policy of a country or an educational institution. Language planning and policy came to attention in the 1950s but were developed into a structured field of study only in the 1990s (Ricento 2006). Language planning can be defined as “[a] systematic, rational, theory-based effort at the societal level to modify the linguistic environment with a view to increasing aggregate welfare. It is typically conducted by official bodies or their surrogates and aimed at part or all of the population living under their jurisdiction” (Grin 2000:7).

Kloss (1971, 1977) classifies language policies that provide language rights to minorities (or speakers of other than the official language) into two types: promotion-oriented policies, by which a government supports teaching and maintaining minority languages; and tolerance-oriented policies, which allow speakers of other languages to learn and use their languages without the government participating in maintaining these languages. Kloss (1971, 1977) suggests that immigrants should enjoy tolerance rights but not promotion rights. Of course, Asian languages that are spoken in Bahrain are not national languages and the type of language rights that would be expected is that of tolerance-oriented rights. This, nevertheless, does not mean that rights are guaranteed by simply allowing minorities to speak their language.

### **3. Explicit vs. implicit language policy**

Language planning, according to Tollefson (1991:16), refers to “all conscious efforts to affect the structure or function of language varieties” while she distinguishes language policy as being “language planning by governments”. Schiffman (1996) distinguished between overt and covert language policies. He explained that overt language policies are formalised, explicit policies, while the covert ones, which are often ignored, are the implicit, *de facto*, unstated ones (Schiffman 1996). He explains that the covert part of policy is “supported and transmitted by the culture” (Schiffman 1996:13). Shohamy (2006:50) uses the terms explicit and implicit for overt and covert respectively. The distinction is simply between stated formal policies as in the laws and regulations of the country or institution for explicit policies, versus the mental representations of language choice and use in interlocutors' minds for implicit policies.

Schiffman(1996) emphasises the importance of studying covert policies for being the de facto practice. In other words, regardless of the written and announced policies, the covert policies are the ones that leave an impact and direct attitudes and reactions, whether they meet or diverge from the explicit policies.

### 3.1 Domains

From a socio-linguistic perspective, linguistic choice is best examined in a socio-linguistic context. While context is often seen as a factor influencing linguistic choice, the linguistic choices a speaker makes can be an indication of how he or she perceives the context (Herman 1961). The socio-linguistic notion of domain was first presented by Fishman(1972), who stressed that, in a multilingual speech community, different settings necessitate the use of different languages and different linguistic varieties from in a monolingual community. Languages spoken by an individual have symbolic and communicative functions for their speakers (Moormann-Kimáková 2016). These functions“can be fulfilled by one or more languages”while not each language can function in any domain (Moormann-Kimáková 2016:53).

With immigrants, the language of their original country or region, at least between the first and second generations, initially maintains a communicative function with the family and community members who cannot speak or do not have a good command of the host country's language. However, it loses some significance at the communicative function level with later generations that have native-like command of the language of the host country. This language of their original country will have a strong symbolic function that serves to construct a part of their identity, especially for the early generation(s). Some immigrants maintain this symbolic function longer than others, depending on the factors affecting their ability and, most importantly, willingness to delay a total shift to the host language and to maintain their language and, often concurrently, their identity as being from a different ethnicity. These factors in turn affect the bottom-up perspective of identity, i.e.to which group a person feels that he or she belongs.

### 3.2 Bahrain as a multilingual society

#### 3.2.1 Demographic facts

Bahrain is a small archipelago in the Arabian Gulf.It has always been open to various cultures, whether via trade or immigration. It declared its independence from the British following a UN survey of the Bahraini population on 16 December 1971.Since then,it has had an Arab government, while encompassing a diverse ethnic composition: mainly, but

not exclusively, Arabs from the west and other nationalities from the east coast of the Gulf (Persians, Pakistanis, Balochis and Indian). On its small land area of 770 km<sup>2</sup>(Survey & Land Registration Bureau 2013a),the population now exceeds one million people(614,830 Bahrainis and 638,361 non-Bahrainis in 2013)(Survey & Land Registration Bureau 2013b).

### 3.2.2 Language education policy in Bahrain

In Bahrain, there are state schools and private schools. State schools are free of charge and all residents, whether citizens or not, are allowed to benefit from them. The only restriction is the system of the catchment area, i.e.each school serves residents of a defined number of blocks surrounding it.Article 7 of the Bahraini Constitution states that“education is compulsory and free in the early stages as specified and provided by law”. The early stages refer to the first nine years, starting from grade 1.According to 2013-2014 statistics provided by the Ministry of Education,there were 206 state schools, 102 of which were for females and 104 were for males(Educational Statistics Section 2014).

### 3.2.3 Urdu and Balochi immigrant families in Bahrain

Far Eastern and Western residents tend to enrol their children in private schools that mainly teach in their native language or in English. There are British,American,Indian,Urdu and Filipino schools,for example. At government schools, on the other hand, besides the majority of Arabs (Bahrainis and other nationals), there is a large number of Pakistani and Balochi students, most of whom come from families who are settled or intend to settle in Bahrain for long periods.

The majority of Asian families in Bahrain are Indians, Pakistanis and Balochis, some of whom still hold their original nationality while others have gained Bahraini citizenship, particularly Pakistanis and Balochis. This makes this sector an important one to focus on when considering integration and educational language policies.

Very often, research on language policy and minorities takes one of two forms. First, the minorities are inhabitants of the region or country in question who may have different ethnicities or origins from the majority (cf. Benedikter 2009). In these cases, the minorities are actually settled in the region or country as their homeland. The other common form of research is that of new immigrants, often of the first three generations. The concept of immigration in the modern sense of the term includes naturalisation, or a request to be naturalised, in the host country. In Bahrain, however, when we consider Asian minorities, neither label fits them. They relate to other

countries from which they, their parents or grandparents have come. They relate to that homeland at the cultural level and often have relatives who still live there and with whom they connect. While most bachelor workers intend to go back home at a certain stage, many Asian families, though not all, intend to settle in Bahrain as long as possible. However, Bahrain has no immigration policies and naturalisation does not happen automatically. This is understandable if one compares the size of the country to its population. Thus, naturalisation is not common, though it happens occasionally.

However, despite naturalisation being unlikely, many Asians find Bahrain an attractive destination to move to for its multicultural nature and its openness to diversity, while maintaining a degree of conservativeness that conforms to that of near-Eastern nationals in general and Muslims in particular. This shift to Bahrain as a family on a working visa (which requires being renewed every two years) without any official immigration process, on the one hand, and the intention to settle in Bahrain for as many years as possible, on the other, makes the status of Asian minorities different from that of immigrants as known in Western culture and literature. Nevertheless, once they have moved to the country as a family, their status is often stable as long as they hold a job and abide by the law of the country. Many Balochi and Pakistani families have been in Bahrain for generations, and a large number of them are naturalised. Naturalised Balochis in particular are more integrated in Bahraini society. More intermingling with other Bahrainis, involving mainly third-generation and later-generation Balochis, has emerged within the Bahraini lifestyle when it comes to clothes, language, customs and traditions.

With Pakistani immigrants, however, most retain an individual sense of identity. This may be partially because Balochistan, according to modern political boundaries, is a vast region divided between (or within) three countries: Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. This means that officially there is no such "country" as Balochistan. Thus, Balochi people tend to associate themselves with either one of the three countries or the country to which they emigrate, and often exist in certain countries of the Arabian Gulf (mainly Bahrain and Oman) as extended families.

The two groups, Pakistani and Balochi families living in Bahrain, are at the practical level immigrants. They are either second or third generation immigrants (many having earned citizenship already), with their family's original language, not Arabic, spoken at home.

### 3.3 Methodology

This being one of few, if not the first, investigations of Bahraini immigrant

speech communities and identity, the researcher considered it appropriate to obtain some generic information about linguistic choice and identity perception. Accordingly, a survey was used to collect quantitative data. First, the study used a cross-sectional examination of younger Urdu and Balochi students at elementary level to high school. The participants were chosen from Urdu and Balochi speakers living in and going to state schools in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, where the vast majority of expatriates live. The research employed a two-page paper-based questionnaire to explore which languages the participants speak, in which domains they use each language, and their perceptions and attitudes towards each language within the implicit language policy in schools.

The participants in this survey are the children of immigrant Urdu and Balochi families who go to state schools in Bahrain. As Spolsky noted, “[i]n an immigration situation, it is common for the children to take leadership in the socialization process” (2004:45). With the children being the speech community members who are most actively affecting language choice made by an immigrant community, the choices of these children are to a great extent affected by language policies, both implicit and explicit. Spolsky (2004:15) asserts that:

More commonly, schools reflect the ideological position of those who control them. Normally, their policy will be driven in part at least by the policy of the national government.... The present language policy model, then, suggests that the school domain is the one most likely to be influenced externally, whether from “below” (home, religion, neighbourhood) or “above” (levels of government), and to be most often the target of activist intervention in support of one variety or another.

This makes the schoolchildren's perception of their identity and of the school language policy a valid viewpoint from which to examine how the implicit language policies are associated with and contribute to integrating Urdu- and Balochi-speaking immigrants into the Bahraini community.

The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) consisted of 16 questions divided into three parts: demographic information, language use, and language and identity. The questions required minimum writing, mostly being multiple choice or requiring answers of only a word or two. Originally, the questions were designed to be used in guided interviews; however, the researcher faced some difficulty in meeting individual students as, while parental consent was needed for ethical reasons, some parents were resistant to the idea. The questions were therefore simplified and translated into Arabic and used as a questionnaire which was distributed to Urdu and Balochi speakers at three different afterschool gatherings, with the support of a number of



native speakers from within the groups to facilitate access to them. The survey was conducted in the period from 26 January to 1 February 2016. The survey process took several days to complete as different groups of participants were met in each of their neighbourhood gatherings on different days.

The researcher recognised some major drawbacks of this method. To begin with, the change of interviewer can affect the responses; hence, the three groups from whom the responses were collected could be said to be put in slightly different conditions. Nevertheless, this was not expected to significantly affect the validity of the results. Another disadvantage of shifting from interviews to a questionnaire was the concern about younger participants being able to fill in the questionnaires properly, despite being assisted by the researcher. However, the limited time the researcher was given necessitated this shift to self-completed questionnaires. The researcher walked around as she read and explained each item in order to assist individual participants with understanding the question and staying on track. No difficulties were faced with this method.

The collected responses were coded using a letter and a two-digit number and saved onto an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. Some responses were grouped under more general categories. For example, Balochi and Urdu were coded as native languages. Thus, whenever a participant responded by stating Urdu or Balochi, whether separately or in combination with other languages, the languages of Urdu and Balochi were replaced with the word "Native". A similar categorisation principle was used for identity. Responses to the open questions of "How would you identify yourself to a foreigner?" and "How do people identify you?" were divided into three general categories as follows: Bahraini, Bahraini in combination with origin (e.g. Bahraini from Pakistani origin, Balochi born in Bahrain, Pakistani Balochi, Pakistani, etc.), and Origin (Pakistani or Balochi). The responses were recorded and some associations were made between responses to certain questions using a chi-square test. The results are provided in detail in the following section.

It must be noted that despite the fact Balochi and Urdu are two different languages and the fact that Balochi people see the Balochi identity as distinct from Pakistani historically, ethnically and traditionally, in this chapter the results are presented as from a single community for several reasons. First, the number of participants in each group is too small to allow analysis or comparison of responses. Second, the two groups are viewed by many of the laypeople in Bahrain as being from the same country since Balochistan is mostly within the boundaries of Pakistan. Third, in Bahrain, the Balochi and Pakistani students who go to government schools often

share a neighbourhood and have some joint social activities and religious ceremonies, something which brings the two cultures and societies close to each other.

### 3.4 Findings

A total of 53 responses (27 female and 26 male) were collected from students at government schools whose native language was either Balochi or Urdu. The participants were from grades 3 to 12, distributed as shown in Table 5.1.

#### 3.4.1 Spoken languages

Participants were asked to list the languages they could communicate with, from strongest to weakest. They all listed at least two languages. A total of 22 participants (41.5%) listed Arabic as their first language, while 29 (54.7%) chose to list their native language (i.e. Urdu or Balochi) as their first language. The remaining two participants chose English as their first language. As for the second language, 25 participants (47.2%) said it was Arabic, and 16 (30.2%) said it was English. The remaining 12 (22.6%) gave their native language as their second language. When it came to their third language, a total of 43 (81.1%) participants provided a response. Of these, 18 participants (34%) stated that it was English, 19 (35.8%) said it was their native language, and only 6 (11.3%) said it was Arabic. Four participants mentioned a fourth language (two Urdu and two Punjabi). Thus, according to the participants' general classification of their command of languages, Arabic was mainly the first, and to some the second. Native languages were mainly viewed as second in the order according to competence.

The participants were then asked which of the languages they had listed that they could communicate with orally (speaking and listening) but could not write or read. A total of 11 participants each mentioned a language. Of these, 2 were Punjabi (the only 2 participants who actually mentioned it in the spoken languages; it was in both cases mentioned as a fourth language); 6 mentioned Balochi (all of whom were of Balochi origin); and 10 mentioned Urdu (5 of whom were Pakistani, whose native language was Urdu, and 5 were Balochi, whose native language was not Urdu).

#### 3.4.2 Domains of language use

The participants were given a table with a list of domains (called "places" in the questionnaire). They were asked to list the languages they mostly used in these domains, from highest to lowest frequency. They were informed that they could mention one or more languages, depending on their actual

language choice. The results by domain are shown in Figures 5.1 to 5.7 (with Urdu and Balochi listed under a unified category as Native language, “Ntv” in the graphs).

The responses, in general, reflected a dominance of native language (Urdu or Balochi) mainly at home with family members and in the neighbourhood, while Arabic was used more frequently in the other domains. A total of between 48 and 52 of the participants provided details for different domains. In the results presented in the following graphs, the percentages are based on the total responses per domain.

Figure 5.1 illustrates language choice made by participants in school as the speech domain. The vast majority (a total of 48, i.e. 92% considered Arabic as their first choice. In this group, 18 (a third of the participants) stated that they used only Arabic at school, while 30 used other languages for communication purposes at school as their second option after Arabic. Only 4 (7.5%) mentioned that they used their native language more frequently at school.

Figure 5.2 summarises the responses of the participants to the languages they used at home, in order of frequency. As is common in immigrant families, native language is dominant with a total of 44 (85% of the participants stating their native language as being the first choice at home. A total of 30 participants (58%) stated that they only used their native language (Urdu or Balochi), and none of the participants used solely Arabic at home. The second biggest group is that using their native language as a first choice and Arabic as their second (22%). As for the eight (15%) participants who chose Arabic as their first language at home, they all indicated that they used both English and their native languages alongside Arabic at home.

In response to the question about which language(s) participants used in their neighbourhood, a total of 51 responses were received. Figure 5.3 demonstrates the number of responses in each category. A major switch to the native languages is noticed, with 33 (63.5%) participants stating that they solely used their native language in the neighbourhood. The second combination of language use was for Arabic and the native language with a total of 12 (23%) participants. This reflects, first, the ethnographic composition of the residential areas, as they are dominated by people from similar linguistic communities; and second, it reflects a desire to demonstrate and maintain their association to their native community and hence maintain this component of their identity that is greatly, though not solely, reflected in the preservation of their language.

A total of 48 participants responded about language use when shopping. As shown in Figure 5.4, the major language is Arabic, with a total of 33 participants (68.8% considering it their first choice; only 12 participants (22.9% considered their native language as their first choice, seven of whom considered Arabic as their second choice. Four participants (8.4%) stated that English is their first choice in shops and stores. Among the 15 participants who did not choose Arabic as their first option, eight mentioned Arabic as a second or third choice, leaving only 7 (14.5%) who did not consider using Arabic in shops and stores.

In response to the section about which language(s) the participants used when reading other than for school, a total of 51 responses were received. As shown in Figure 5.5, 27 participants (74.5%) stated that they used Arabic, while 12 others mentioned Arabic alongside another language, whether it was their native language or English or both. Of these 12 participants, 11 had Arabic as their first choice. Only 3 participants stated that they read solely in their native language and 7 mentioned only English. The native language as a first choice was only chosen by 2 participants (3.9%).

In response to the section about languages used in writing diaries (if applicable), a total of 34 participants shared their experience. Figure 5.6 shows that 25 (73.5%) stated that Arabic was their first choice, of whom 19 (55.9%) mentioned that they wrote solely in Arabic. Two participants (5.9%) wrote in their native language as their first choice and Arabic as the second, and 4 (11.8%) wrote their diaries in their native language.

A total of 45 responses were collected about language(s) used in writing lists. Figure 5.7 shows that Arabic was the first choice of 30 participants (88.2%) of whom 26 (76.5%) had Arabic as the only choice. Eight participants (23.5%) used their native language as their first choice, and 7 (20.6%) chose English as the language to write shopping and things-to-do lists.

### 3.4.3 Language command vs. preference

The participants were then asked which languages they thought they spoke best and which they most liked to use. As for the language spoken best, 23 (43.4%) mentioned that it was Arabic and 26 (49.1%) said it was their native language. Two said it was English. When it came to the language they preferred or liked to speak, 26 (49.1%) said Arabic, 17 (32.1%) said their native language and 8 (15.1%) said English. One participant said Punjabi. Generally, there was no difference between preference and command, with a tendency towards English, probably for having more weight in

employment in Bahrain than Arabic, something that the public seem to realise at a very early stage.

For the following questions, a chi-square test of independence was used to examine the association between pairs of responses. The results showed that there was either a significant association or a high association between certain pairs of responses, with  $\chi^2(6)=34.59, p<0.05$ .

As the table illustrates, over 70 of the participants said they preferred to study at schools in which the main medium of instruction was Arabic and only 13 of them wished they could study in a school where it was their native language (Balochi or Urdu). The rest (15) wished they could be in a school where the medium of instruction was English. As for how they identified themselves, a total of 31 (59.5%) identified themselves as either Bahraini or Bahraini in combination with their other identity in one way or another (e.g. Balochi-Bahraini, Pakistani born in Bahrain, Bahraini from Pakistani origins, a Balochi living in Bahrain, etc.). The remaining 21 participants (40.4%) identified themselves by labels other than Bahraini or Bahraini with association with another identity (i.e. Balochi or Pakistani, and one of them used the label "foreigner").

Interestingly, when associating the responses to this question with those of how the participants identified themselves, there appeared to be a clear association between the two. None of those who solely identified themselves as Bahraini wished to be at a school teaching in their native language. Additionally, most of those who identified themselves as using a combination of identities, one of which was Bahraini, were also strongly in favour of studying in Arabic-medium schools. Only 1 of the 15 who identified themselves as such wished they could study in a school where the medium of instruction was their native language. As for those who identified themselves solely with an identity different than Bahraini (e.g. Balochi or Pakistani), more than half were still in favour of studying in Arabic, although over a quarter wished they could study in their native language and 14 would prefer studying in English.

When asked whether they thought they needed Arabic for everyday use in Bahrain, the majority agreed that they do (see Figure 5.8). As expected, the older ones (grades 7 to 12) were more certain about this need than the younger ones (grades 1 to 6). Over a quarter of the younger participants thought that they did not need Arabic, compared with just over a tenth of the older ones.

In general, over 63 of the participants believed that speaking Arabic properly would help their integration into the Bahraini community (see

Table 5.3). When grouped according to school grade, the younger participants were less in favour of the need for Arabic for integration, with just over half thinking it would help, a quarter thinking that it would not help and the rest being unsure. Uncertainty, however, dropped dramatically among the older students, and more than two thirds of these participants thought learning Arabic would help them integrate into the Bahraini community. In both age groups, however, slightly over 25% disagreed and did not think learning Arabic would help them integrate better.

When analysed according to sex, female participants were all positive about the role of learning Arabic in helping them to integrate into the Bahraini community, as Table 5.4 reflects.

This was the only significant association of response according to the sex of the participant. It is a large difference and there is no uncertainty in the female stance towards the role of Arabic in integrating into Bahraini society.

As shown in Table 5.5, despite their preferred medium of instruction, the majority of participants (77.4%) believed they needed Arabic in their daily life. If compared to what participants said about the need for Arabic to integrate, the participants were more definite about the need for Arabic for daily use than they were about the need for it for integration.

Participants were asked if they were ever told at school not to speak their native language, and, if so, where. To this question there were a total of 51 responses (see Table 5.6). Over 30 of the participants said that they were never asked not to speak their native language, but 12 reported that they were asked not to speak it in class, 14 in both class and during break, and only 6% during the break. There seems to be a freedom of language choice at schools, and students automatically and deliberately shift to the most suitable language. The fact that only very few were told not to speak their native language in class does not mean that students do not speak Balochi or Urdu in class, but that they shift to Arabic without being asked to. When the responses to this question were associated with the responses to whether the participants thought learning Arabic would help them integrate into the Bahraini community, the two groups were largely in favour of it. There was no association between being told not to speak their native language at school and a rejection of the need for Arabic to integrate.

There was no significant association between the feeling of the need for Arabic to integrate into the Bahraini community and whether teachers provided special support to the participants for not speaking Arabic.

The participants were then asked to circle how they defined themselves

and were given a number of examples: a Bahraini, a Pakistani, a Pakistani living in Bahrain, a Pakistani-Bahraini, a Pakistani born in Bahrain, a Bahraini originally from Pakistan, an Asian living in Bahrain, Hindi, foreigner, etc. They were then asked to state how others defined them.

As Table 5.7 illustrates, there was no significant difference between how the participants defined themselves and how others normally defined them. This means that the bottom-up perspective of identity (how they feel) did not significantly differ from the top-down perspective (how the society identified them).

Since Arabic in Bahrain has two varieties - high (Modern Standard Arabic) and low (Bahraini dialect(s)) - the participants were asked which they found easier.

Table 5.8 shows that the results did not differ significantly despite the Bahraini dialect being seen as easier by some, a result which is the normal response expected from anyone about his or her first language when asked to compare his or her local dialect with the standard language, giving Arabic the position of a first language for the majority of the participants. However, the difference is not significant. No association was found between the responses to this question and any other questions. The participants' views of the Bahraini dialect and standard Arabic, thus, did not affect their language preferences or integration into the Bahraini community.

#### **4. Discussion**

Although language conflicts are associated with nationalism conflicts (Hechter 2000), having a unified language is not enough for a group to see itself as a nation, as can be seen in countries such as Ireland and Serbia (Patten and Kymlicka 2003). More factors play a part in making integration possible. It is also understandable that attitudes towards the language of the host country are a result of various and complex factors; however, I believe that the implicit policy of language in state schools in Bahrain has a major effect on Balochi and Pakistani participants' attitudes towards Arabic and the level of integration. This can be confirmed by the fact that while the data illustrated that native languages are the first choice at home and in the neighbourhood, the responses of the participants at state schools in Bahrain reflect first a high degree of satisfaction with Arabic as the medium of instruction, on the one hand, and secondly a significant association of one's identity with Bahrain. The integration reflected in the choice of presenting oneself as a Bahraini or a Pakistani in association with one's native identity was also confirmed by the high number of positive responses to the question of whether they needed Arabic for daily use and the question of whether

they needed Arabic for integration. It is true that the positive response to the latter was smaller than to the former; nevertheless, this reflects the participants' awareness of the fact that integration requires more than speaking a language, something which signals a degree of cultural awareness.

One interesting finding concerned participants being told not to speak their native language at school. The fact that a large number of participants said they were not stopped from speaking their language(s) is not because they had a freedom of language choice at school, since the official language is Arabic and all classes (apart from English language classes) are conducted only in Arabic. Instead, this reflects a conscious language choice made by the participants. They are aware of the language policy in class and shift to Arabic there. Even those who mentioned that they have been asked in class or during the break not to speak in their native language still demonstrate in their other responses a high level of integration and are highly satisfied with Arabic as the medium of instruction. In turn, nevertheless, they extensively use their native language(s) at home and in their neighbourhood, which allows them to maintain the other dimension of their identity without a feeling of linguistic oppression. This confirms that the implicit language policy in Bahrain's state schools has a positive impact on immigrants' integration.

While the main factor affecting language use at school, at home and in the neighbourhood domains is the presence of other participants in an illocutionary act (i.e. the other speakers and listeners/readers), writing lists and diaries is more of a solo language use with no participants other than the writer himself or herself. Thus, language choice in this situation may better reflect which language(s) the participants tend to feel more comfortable with, or as some may like to put it, the main language they think in. This can be the case because "interest in the language on the part of the third generation may resurface only as part of an attempt to construct a symbolic ethnic identity" (Carnevale 2009:10).

Interestingly, when it came to these domains of language use, native languages had a very low priority and Arabic language became dominant. This raises the question of whether the participants are in the stage of shifting to Arabic, or if the next generations are more likely not to be addressed in native languages by the participants as their parents. At this stage, the Arabic register is added to the speakers' repertoire. However, as with many minorities, there is a risk of gradually abandoning native languages. The likelihood of this shift is high in most immigrant generations; however, the shift becomes noticeably slower (or sometimes even stagnant) when there are other traditions such as those that most



Balochi and Pakistani immigrants in Bahrain maintain: intermarriage, living within a community from the same linguistic background, and having connections with relatives in the home country.

Ideally, to understand whether and to what extent the years mingling in Arabic-medium state schools has affected self-perception and attitudes toward languages, one would use the data to conduct a cross-sectional examination and compare responses of students in the very early years to the responses of those in the last few years (e.g. grades 1 and 2 in contrast to grades 11 and 12). However, this is not possible with our data since the number of participants, after categorising them according to grades (see Table 5.1), is too small to conduct any useful comparison. This keeps the data limited to the self-perception after “some” time of exposure to state school, with that time ranging from a few months to 12 years.

## **5. Conclusion**

This chapter has shed light on the association of being at a state school and hence exposed to implicit language policies, on the one hand, and the level of integration into the Bahraini community without losing one's own linguistic rights and ethnic identity, on the other. It has found that the state schools in Bahrain are positively contributing to the feeling of integration and command of the Arabic language, without it interfering with the other facets of the identities of the participants or intruding in their linguistics rights, something which pertains to identity construction.

Although I realise that open questions could have enriched the qualitative data, I excluded them in order to focus on processing basic information on the topic, a subject not previously examined by academic research. At this initial stage, I have attempted to provide a general overview of this speech community in order to pave the way for further studies within the rich and varied linguistic communities of Bahrain.

Since no previous research addressed minority languages in Bahrain nor the effect of explicit and/or implicit language policies on the speakers of these languages from different perspectives (integration, identity conflict, language shift and language maintenance, etc.), it is strongly recommended that the use of these languages be further documented. A better understanding of these overlooked topics will serve not only the speech communities themselves, but also the educational institutions, other communities and the government. It will encourage the development of better procedures and policies to help improve or at least maintain a harmonious society that maintains its national language while balancing it with language rights within rich multinational and multi-ethnic societies.

such as Bahrain. It has to be borne in mind, for example, that most parents cannot communicate in Arabic, and school-home correspondence, which is currently solely in Arabic in state schools, should include a variety of languages; this is something that does not contradict the acknowledgement of Arabic as the national language but which in turn should accelerate integration.